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ABSTRACT

For several decades Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have been a resource in the workplace to handle troubled employees. The areas of supervisor training and employee motivation provide opportunities for involvement of psychologists in the EAP field. Surveys conducted with EAP directors revealed that many programs are planning to do supervisor training, and believe that it is effective in achieving a variety of goals. The technique of constructive confrontation has been used extensively in the workplace to motivate troubled employees to go to EAPs. A recent study by Boston University's Center on Work and Family found that over one-half of the EAPs surveyed were using confrontational approaches with their clients. In contrast to this approach, a technique called Motivational Interviewing, which views motivation as something one does rather than as something one has, and other similar approaches have had positive results. Psychologists are already in the forefront of this research effort, and future research can take advantage of the availability of the workplace setting. (LLL)

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EAP Referrals:

From Supervisor Training to Client Assessment

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Introduction

For several decades Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have been a resource in the workplace to handle troubled employees. One of the central strategies behind EAPs has been to use the leverage of potential job loss to increase the motivation of troubled employees to seek help. Supervisors have always been and continue to be the critical link in this process of motivating employees to utilize EAPs. More recently, psychologists have begun looking at the issue of motivation once people actually get to EAP counselors and other helping professionals. This confluence of issues now presents a variety of opportunities for psychologists in the EAP field.

This paper will focus on two specific areas of opportunity: supervisor training and employee assessment. Specifically, the practice of training supervisors will be examined using data from a recent national survey. Next, the assessment practices of EAP counselors will be discussed and an innovative technique for increasing motivation for change will be offered.

Supervisor Training

Middle managers, or supervisors, play a critical role in the area of employee assistance. Because of their unique position, they are able to intervene with a troubled employee using the now familiar steps of constructive confrontation: identification,

documentation, confrontation and referral. In light of the pivotal part supervisors play for EAPs, the need to train supervisors has also been accepted and given high priority for over two decades (Trice and Belasco, 1968; Trice and Roman, 1972). Despite this acceptance, supervisor training has remained relatively unexamined with only a few notable exceptions (Googins and Kurtz, 1980; Hoffman and Roman, 1984; Trice and Beyer, 1981). This paper will present the results of a national telephone survey which was funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse. This survey focused on the current practices of supervisor training by EAPs as well as the future trends of EAP training.

Survey questions covered a variety of content areas including: current training practices, attitudes towards training, perceived barriers to training, training methods and curriculum, and future trends. Overall, most EAP directors expressed strong, positive feelings about their supervisor training and continue to give it high priority in their program activities. Most respondents felt that supervisor training is effective in achieving a variety of goals including: increased supervisor awareness of the EAP, improved supervisor attitudes toward the EAP, increased willingness of supervisors to consult with the EAP, greater integration of the EAP into the corporation, improved supervisor attitudes toward troubled employees, increased ability of supervisors to identify troubled employees, increased supervisor referrals and increased self referrals.

Though these perceptions of supervisor training efficacy are encouraging, empirical data are necessary to validate these perceptions. Our preliminary analyses indicate that EAPs which conduct supervisor training actually have significantly higher referral rates than those without training programs (Schneider, Colan and Googins, in press).

Despite the apparent advantages to conducting supervisor training, some EAPs are unable to maintain such programs. Approximately 13% of the EAPs we surveyed did not conduct supervisor training in the previous year. Moreover, many EAP directors expressed concern that they were not doing enough training due to limited resources, managerial apathy, and organizational change. Unfortunately, the demands on EAPs to train are increasing. Over two-thirds of those surveyed expect to be doing other types of training in the next few years. These newer training programs have different emphases, such as training on drug testing, AIDS, and wellness; and often target employees as opposed to supervisors. While this presents a dilemma to many EAPs, it also presents an opportunity for psychologists.

In order to meet the future demands for training, our survey showed that many EAPs are beginning to use more skilled trainers. These trainers are sometimes hired as outside consultants, while other programs upgrade the training skills of their own staff. Those psychologists with an interest in training or organizational settings are well positioned to take advantage of

these expanding training opportunities. In addition, psychologists can utilize their unique skills to develop new training programs or enhance existing ones to improve their quality and effectiveness. The three elements of needs assessment, program design and evaluation provide a useful framework to develop or review training programs.

Needs assessment involves the collection of information necessary for the design and evaluation of a training program. These data include: the climate for training, barriers to training, and available resources. Other necessary data requires the careful assessment of the knowledge, skills and atitudes of potential trainees. Without a needs assessment a training program runs the risk of being ineffective or even inappropriate for its trainees. Some assumptions can be made that knowledge of the EAP, the ability to identify troubled employees and a positive attitude toward helping troubled employees should be major emphases in a supervisor training program. However, the measurement and further understanding of these and other variables is an area where psychologists can contribute. It is only through information gathered during the needs assessment that the skills to be enhanced can be clarified and the criterion measures can be determined to judge the success of the program.

The design of a training program involves decisions on instructional principles, media selection, curriculum content as well as budgetary and staffing considerations. Fortunately, EAP

training has the benefit of a considerable history upon which to draw. The steps of constructive confrontation -- identification, documentation, confrontation and referral -- provide the basis for most supervisor training during the last twenty years. Certainly this is a safe foundation for a training program but trainers should feel free to experiment with different training curricula. In addition, the skills of trainers are important to the success of a program and our survey showed that those programs whose trainers had received some training of their own had higher referral rates than programs whose trainers were self-taught. The more highly skilled trainers tended to use more sophisticated methods in their sessions, such as role play and small group discussions.

The evaluation of training programs is another area where psychologists can most easily transfer their skills to the EAP field. Evaluation design for an EAP training program is a fairly straighforward process which involves specifying criterion measures and a comparison or control group. The Behavioral Index of Troubled Employees (BITE) is a 23-item questionnaire which Beyer and Gerstein (1988) have developed to measure the ability of supervisors to identify troubled employees. This measure as well as supervisor referral rates and overall utilization rates can be used as measures of training efficacy. The design of an evaluation can be as rigorous or creative as the goals of the evaluator require. It is important to remember that evaluations can be informative without being scientifically airtight. Any

reasonable comparison group can give some indication of the value of a program as long as the criterion measure is fairly reliable and valid. Whatever the design of the evaluation, it is important that the results are used in a continual process of refining the training program. This insures that a training program is responsive to the needs of the trainees and the larger organization.

Assessment of EAP Clients

Clearly, psychologists can be major participants in the design and implementation of supervisor training programs which encourage the use of EAPs by troubled employees. But what happens once an employee goes to an EAP? Perhaps the most crucial function of an EAP is to assess a client's motivation for change and facilitate readiness for treatment. This is an aspect of EAPs which has received very little attention. Not only is there very little information about current EAP assessment practices, but there have been no experimental comparisons of different assessment techniques. The rest of this paper will focus on an issue which has increasing relevance to EAPs and psychology in general: how to increase motivation for change during assessment.

As mentioned earlier, the technique of constructive confrontation has been used extensively in the workplace to motivate troubled employees to go to EAPs. Unfortunately, going

to an EAP does not necessarily mean an employee is sincerely interested in changing his behavior. Moreover, the last decade has seen a dramatic increase in self-referrals. For these employees without job performance difficulties as well as those who receive encouragement to attend an EAP from other sources, employing constructive confrontation is not an option. Therefore, the assessment process often becomes a make-or-break situation which will largely determine the future choices and outcome of a client.

A confrontational approach to assessment appears to be quite common and accepted in the EAP field on the basis of a recent survey by the study team at Boston University's Center on Work and Family. This survey of 25 EAP directors explored the current assumptions and assessment approaches by EAP counselors. Eighty-three percent of EAP directors stated that "all or most" of their counselors believe that "In order for change to occur it is important that clients accept themselves as 'alcoholic' or 'addicted'." Over half of the EAP directors surveyed (56%) responded that "all or most" of their counselors feel that "assessment data should be used in a confrontational fashion." And finally, 57% of EAP directors reported that "all or most" of their counselors see resistance as "denial - a trait of alcoholics - which requires confrontation."

In contrast to the confrontational approach described above, Miller (1983; 1988a; 1988b) has developed a technique called Motivational Interviewing. In this approach, a client's motivation for change is conceptualized as a more malleable

process as opposed to the traditional view of motivation as a characteristic, or trait of the client. According to Miller "in this broader view, motivation can be understood not as something one has but rather as something one does. . . It involves recognizing a problem, searching for a way to change, and then beginning, continuing, and complying with that change strategy" (Miller, 1988a, p. 69).

Miller (1988c) describes the essential elements of Motivational Interviewing as consisting of a two-hour structured evaluation followed at a later date by a feedback session. During the initial evaluation, a battery of tests is administered to the clients in order to objectively assess their level of substance abuse impairment. While Miller has established a specific protocol, he emphasizes that his particular measures are not definitive and that other instruments may similiarly be employed. What he does stress is that, whatever the instruments, it is most critical that the assessment battery be sufficiently comprehensive to assess the dimensions of consumption level, substance abuse problems, family history, health impairment, pathological substance abuse signs, and neuropsychological impairment. Following the evaluation, and approximately one week later, a personal feedback session is conducted. The counselor's approach during this session is characterized by the following: (1) a de-emphasis on labels so that a client does not have to accept the label of "alcoholic" in order for change to occur; (2) an emphasis on personal choice regarding the client's future use of alcohol and other drugs; (3) an objective

evaluation which focuses on eliciting the client's own concerns; (4) the presentation of objective assessment data in a clear but low-key manner which does not impose conclusions on the client; (5) the belief that resistance is an interpersonal behavior pattern which is influenced by a counselor's behavior; (6) the meeting of resistance with reflection and not contradiction; and (7) the negotiation of treatment goals based on objective data and acceptability to the client (Miller, 1988a).

Initial research on Motivational Interviewing (Miller, 1988c) found that Motivational Interviewing promoted less motivated clients to seek help and modestly suppressed drinking behavior. Miller concluded that Motivational Interviewing can provide a "head start" on behavior change which can be amplified by subsequent efforts. The most recent studies by Miller (1989; 1990) reveal that Motivational Interviewing produces significantly less resistance during the assessment sessions as well as better outcome at one-year followup. These findings are consistent with earlier research which found that a confrontational counseling style produced client resistance (Patterson and Forgatch, 1985) and was also correlated with worse outcomes in the treatment of alcohol problems (Miller et al., 1980; Valle, 1981).

Other research on the efficacy of brief interventions, similar to Motivational Interviewing, has also been very positive (Edwards et al., 1977; Miller and Taylor, 1980). In his review of the literature on motivation for treatment, Miller (1985) found a range of strategies which can affect the assessment and

intervention process. Some examples included advice-giving interventions (Burnum, 1974), feedback styles (Edwards et al., 1977), decreasing attractiveness of problem behaviors (Kanfer, 1980) and providing choice (Carroll, 1980). In addition, Edwards (1977), conducted a well-controlled study of the impact of a three-hour assessment followed by a single one-hour session of feedback employing an approach similiar to motivational interviewing. When compared with a standard hospital substance abuse treatment program, no differences in effectiveness were found over a ten-year follow-up period.

The use of motivational interviewing in an EAP setting is an obvious yet provocative application. Moreover, the process of change itself is a controversial subject which deserves more research. Psychologists are already in the forefront of this research effort and future research can take advantage of the availability of workplace settings. Not only can psychologists benefit from such activity but EAPs would also do well to complement their existing activities with the services of counseling psychologists.

Summary

The employee assistance field is fertile ground for psychologists to practice their profession. Besides the traditional clinical role which psychologists can and do play in EAPs, the training of supervisors is another area which offers opportunity to psychologists. Clearly this is a critical part of

EAP service since it is through supervisor intervention that many employees become clients of the EAP. In addition, the techniques employed to assess EAP clients are being more rigorously examined. This research suggests that a more sophisticated approach based on new understanding of the process of change may be more effective in motivating clients to change their behavior. Psychologists are natural players in this evolution since these new techniques have grown out of psychological research.

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